



# November/December 2010 Update for District Contacts for Paraprofessional Issues



*The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), established the District Contacts for Paraprofessional Issues to disseminate information of importance to paraprofessionals and their supervisors. The focus of this newsletter is to provide resources for more effective teacher and paraprofessional collaboration*

## **Educational Testing Service (ETS) Parapro Assessment Dates for 2010-2011 School Year**

December 16, 2010, Registration Deadline for **January 15, 2011**

May 12, 2011, Registration Deadline for **June 11, 2011**

Completed registration forms and payment must be submitted by the deadline, or applicant will be charged a \$45 late fee.

Not all test centers are open on all test dates. Refer to the Test Center list for availability on the ETS Web site:  
[www.ets.org/parapro](http://www.ets.org/parapro).

### **A Problem Solving Exercise:**

**Each month, we will provide a case study and discussion questions to facilitate discussion among teachers, paraprofessionals and administrators.**

Mary Brown has been assigned to Ken Damon's 5th grade classroom. On the first day of school, Mr. Damon introduces himself and the paraprofessional by saying, "I am Mr. Damon, your teacher, and this is Mary. Mary is a helping teacher for Tammy, Shawn and Karen."

### **Case Study Questions:**

- A. How do you feel about Mr. Damon's introducing Mary by her first name?
- B. Discuss the potential problems that could result by assigning the paraprofessional to work with a child rather than a class or program.
- C. How could this be handled differently?
- D. What are the professional and ethical implications of this case?

## **District Spotlight:**

### **South Windsor Public Schools**

During the 2008-2009 school year, South Windsor Public Schools participated in an audit focused on the use of paraprofessionals throughout the district. From a special services department point of view, this audit looked at how special education instructional paraprofessionals are assigned, utilized, and how effective paraprofessionals are in the district. Recommendations from the audit led the special services department to develop an action plan focused on the development of paraprofessionals in South Windsor. The Action Plan for Paraprofessional Development was created through the collaborative efforts of Denise E. Epps, Director of Special Services, Maureen A. Pearson, Supervisor of Special Education, and myself, John E. Szalkiewicz, Supervisor of Special Education.

South Windsor Public Schools' Action Plan for Paraprofessional Development consists of seven goals. These goals are: (1) Develop revised job descriptions and evaluations for paraprofessionals; (2) Utilize job descriptions and evaluation tools for paraprofessionals; (3) Provide ongoing training for paraprofessionals; (4) Provide training for teachers working with paraprofessionals; (5) Provide training for administrators; (6) Develop cost-saving measures; and (7) Review current practices of assigning 1:1 paraprofessionals.

One of the biggest accomplishments coming from the action plan was the development of a Paraprofessional Handbook. Some topics covered in the handbook created by the special services department include South Windsor's community position statement and vision for learning, the newly created job description and evaluation tool which includes a paraprofessional self-assessment, guidelines for working in the classroom and topics every paraprofessional should know. In addition, information is provided regarding district policies and procedures and the paraprofessional's role as a mandated reporter.

The handbook, completed in August 2010, has provided district paraprofessionals consistency with regard to job requirements and expectations as well as the manner by which they are evaluated. While the handbook is complete, it will continue to require attention as additions are made and current information is updated. Over time, we hope the handbook will be a comprehensive document to support the vital work of our district paraprofessionals.

Paraprofessionals have been provided copies of the handbook, as well as, building principals and associate principals. At the start of the current school year, principals and supervising special education teachers had the opportunity to review the newly created handbook with paraprofessional staff. The document demonstrates South Windsor's commitment to its paraprofessionals and provides the information and guidelines they so often are looking for.

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## **Providing Building and Job Orientation:**

### **Below are suggested items in a Building or Job Orientation**

Prepare a list of terms frequently used in the building that may need a definition or explanation, such as Title I, individualized education program (IEP), learning disability (LD), behavior disorder (BD), etc.

Make sure newly hired paraprofessionals know some basic building information, such as:

- Parking availability;
- Location of staff restrooms;
- Location of staff lounge;
- Scheduling for staff breaks and lunch;
- Bus system;
- Student demographics-describe any recent changes;
- Location of stored materials and procedures for obtaining them;
- Office procedures; and
- Lunchroom procedures.

Appoint a committee to design a building-based handbook for paraprofessionals. The handbook could contain the following:

- Paraprofessional definition;
- Map of building;
- Phone numbers of faculty and staff;
- Emergency procedures (fire drill, tornado, earthquake, etc.);
- Job descriptions;
- Chain of command (organizational structure);
- Staff development opportunities;
- Supervision policy;
- Evaluation criteria;
- Appeal/grievance procedures;
- District policies (confidentiality, etc.);
- Discipline procedures (Playground rules, cafeteria rules, etc.);
- Procedures to report child abuse and neglect;
- School calendar;
- Procedures for substitutes;
- Person to call if ill or absent;
- School schedules (daily and weekly schedules, meeting schedules, etc.);
- Other items specific to school activities; and
- District reporting forms.

Make sure paraprofessionals know their role is to assist and support teacher-directed instruction.

Taken from Let's Team Up! A Checklist for Paraprofessionals, Teachers, and Principals by Kent Gerlach, 7th edition.

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